

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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P R 121510Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4551

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY KIGALI UNN

AMCONSUL BUKAVU UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0721

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BY

SUBJECT: RESHUFFLING OF BURUNDI CABINET

SUMMARY: TRANSFER OF FOREIGN MINISTER SIMBANANIYE TO LESS PRESTIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY STILL LEAVES THIS CAPABLE OFFICIAL IN KEY POST. HIS ARCH ENEMY, INTERIOR MINISTER RWURI, WHO SURELY WANTED SIMBANANIYE'S OUSTER, PROBABLY LOST HIS CHANCE WHEN HIS TYPICALLY RUTHLESS ACTION LAST WEEK IN ARRESTING BISHOP OF BURURI HAD TO BE REVERSED BY MICOMBERO. WHETHER SIMBANANIYE'S DEPARTURE FROM EXTERNAL AFFAIRS BRINGS POLICY MODIFICATION IN FORM OF LESS STRIDENT BURUNDI IDENTIFICATION WITH ASIAN COMMUNISTS AND THIRD WORLD RADICALS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. NEW MINISTER BIMAZUBUTE HAS PAST RECORD OF EXTREME "PROGRESSIVISM" BUT HAS LATELY SHOWN MORE MODERATION AND MATURITY. OTHER SHIFTS GENERAL FAVOR MODERATES.

END SUMMARY.

1. NOVEMBER 11 PRESIDENTIAL DECREE ANNOUNCES THAT FOLLOWING REELECTION OF MICOMBERO AS PRESIDENT OCTOBER 19, CABINET HAS

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BEEN REORGANIZED. INCUMBENTS KEEP THEIR POSITIONS EXCEPT

THAT (1) UPRONA PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BIZINDAVYI (WHO IS ALSO SURETE CHIEF) TAKES ON ADDED JOB OF MINISTER OF ORIENTATION, AND ASSUMES FUNCTIONS FORMERLY BELONGING TO (NOW ABOLISHED) MINISTRY OF INFORMATION (WHOSE CHIEF MUYUMPU IS OUT OF A JOB); (2) FOREIGN MINISTER SIMBANANIYE AND EDUCATION MINISTER BIMAZUBUTE EXCHANGE JOBS; (3) THE MINISTRIES OF THE ECONOMY AND FINANCE ARE MERGED UNDER THE FINANCE MINISTER MPOZAGARA; (4) THE FORMER MINISTER OF THE ECONOMY (DAMIEN BARAKAMFITIYE) BECOMES THE NEW SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR MINISTER (WITH THE INCOMPETENT PREVIOUS MINISTER BIHORUBUSA, LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT); AND (5) THE INEFFECTIVE PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER (DEVENGE) IS REPLACED BY DR. JOSEPH NINDORERA, UNTIL RECENTLY AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA, BUT FORMERLY DIRECTOR GENERAL IN HEALTH MINISTRY IN 1960'S. THE SAME DECREE PROVIDES THAT HENCEFORTH, THE CABINET WILL MEET REGULARLY ONCE A WEEK UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE MINISTER SENIOR IN AGE. THE SAME PROCLAMATION SPECIFIES A NUMBER OF AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENTS, WHICH MAY BE A CONSEQUENCE OF THE CHANGE IN FOREIGN MINISTERS.

2. THE OLDEST CABINET MEMBER IS THE UNINSPIRING, BUT COMPETENT AND RELATIVELY NON-POLITICAL AGRICULTURE MINISTER BIGAYIMPUNZI, AND THERE IS SOME SUGGESTION THAT HIS CHAIRMANSHIP WILL AMOUNT TO A WEAK DE FACTO PRIME MINISTERSHIP. AT THE LEAST, IT IS EXPECTED TO BRING ABOUT BETTER INTERMINISTERIAL COORDINATION THAN HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE NONE-TOO-FORCEFUL HUTU SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE PRESIDENCY, GAETAN NIKOBAMYE (WHO APPARENTLY KEEPS HIS JOB). (SEE PARA 3, BUJUMBURA 688 NOTAL FOR BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF BIGAYIMPUNZI).

3. THE CONTINUING ASCENT OF BIZANDAVYI'S STAR IS QUITE APPARENT, AND THAT IS PROBABLY A GOOD AUGURY FOR MODERATION. AF/C DIRECTOR CUTLER AND I HAD 45 MINUTE MEETING WITH HIM ON NOVEMBER 09, AND HE SEEMED RATHER REALISTIC IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE HARSH REALITIES OF BURUNDI LIFE AND PROBLEMS. CONTRARY TO USUAL PROPAGANDA ABOUT SUPREMACY OF UPRONA (WHICH THE PRESENT DECREE AGAIN RITUALLY REPEATS), BIZINDAVYI SAID THAT PARTY IS ONLY A TRANSMISSION BELT TO MODERNIZE, GALVANIZE, AND SUPERVISE THE MASSES WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY HELD THEMSELVES ALOOF FROM NATIONAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT

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ALL POLICIES ARE MADE BY MICOMBERO AND GOVERNMENT, AND THAT PARTY HAS NO CENTRAL APPARATUS ON SOVIET BLOC PARTY LINES. GIVEN THESE PARTY FUNCTIONS, IT MAKES GOOD SENSE FOR HIM TO TAKE CHARGE OF GOVERNMENTAL PROPAGANDA AND INFORMATION ORGANS FOR BETTER COORDINATION WITH PARTY WORK.

4. MINISTERIAL SHIFTS DECREASE NUMBER OF "SHOWPIECE" HUTUS IN CABINET FROM FOUR TO TWO,

BUT ETHNIC ASPECTS ARE PROBABLY COINCIDENTAL. NONE OF FOUR HUTUS HAS BEEN VERY IMPRESSIVE, BUT BARAKAMFITIYE, WHO IS GIVEN NEW MINISTERIAL JOB, IS BEST OF LOT. EXPANDED BAILIWICK OF FINANCE MINISTER MPOZAGARA IS ANOTHER GOOD AUGURY. EUROPEAN ADVISERS WORKING WITH HIM IN LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE COMMENTED ON HIS ENERGY AND TECHNICAL OBJECTIVITY, AND HE IS AMONG BEST EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS HERE (THOUGH AS LAWYER, NOT ECONOMIST).

5. OF MOST IMMEDIATE INTEREST TO FOREIGN COMMUNITY IN BUJUMBURA IS DEPARTURE OF SIMBANANIYE FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY AFTER THREE AND ONE HALF YEARS. THIS HIGHLY TALENTED BUT DEVIOUS, AMBITIOUS AND OFTEN IMMODERATE MAN HAD DEVELOPED CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE AND APLOMB IN THE DIPLOMATIC BUSINESS, WHICH WILL NOT EASILY BE REPLACED ESPECIALLY SINCE OTHER EXPERIENCED MEN, SUCH AS VICE MINISTER KARENZO AND POLITICAL DIRECTOR GENERAL MAGENCE IN THE MINISTRY ARE ALSO TO LEAVE WITH AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENTS). NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS NOW A CHANCE THAT BURUNDI FOREIGN POLICY WILL BECOME LESS DOGMATICALLY "PROGRESSIVE", THAT IS, LESS AUTOMATICALLY LINED UP BEHIND THE ASIAN COMMUNIST AND NON ALIGNED RADICAL STATES. THE NEW MINISTER, A MAN OF GREAT INTELLIGENCE, HAS HAD A CAREER OF HIGH POSTS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERIOR, AND EDUCATION, AS WELL AS IN PARTY WORK AND IN THE PRESIDENCY. HIS RECORD THROUGH THE LATTER 1960'S SHOWED A PENCHANT FOR RADICAL AFRICAN CAUSES, FOR CHINESE AND NORTH KOREAN POSITIONS, AND FOR EXTREME ANTI-COLONIALISM BORDERING ON ANTI-WHITE RACISM. MORE RECENT REPORTS HAVE NOTED GROWING MATURITY, MODERATION, AND FAIRNESS, THOUGH ALL AGREE THAT HE IS A VERY HARD BARGAINER, A DEMANDING NEGOTIATOR, AND A MOST SELF-ASSURED, ALMOST CONEITED AND ARROGANT MAN. WE WILL RESERVE JUDGEMENT UNTIL EVIDENCE OF HIS PERFORMANCE BEGINS TO COME IN.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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6. OBSERVERS WHO HAVE BEEN PREDICTING SIMBANANIYE'S POLITICAL DEMISE SINCE AUGUST, AS ONE AFTER ANOTHER OF HIS ONCE POWERFUL CRONIES HAS BITTEN THE DUST, ARE NOT SURPRISED TO SEE HIM OUSTED AS FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT ARE CONFUSED BY HIS TRANSFER TO EDUCATION. THIS CHANGEOVER MAY HAVE BEEN IN MICOMBERO'S MIND FOR SOME TIME (FOR EXAMPLE, SIMBANANIYE SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT ON NOVEMBER 04 AT THE OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITY YEAR), BUT REPORTS EVEN DURING THE LAST WEEK HAVE HAD SIMBANANIYE AS ASSERTIVE AS USUAL ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN FACT, WITH HIS KEEN MIND AND EXCEPTIONAL DRIVE, HE MAY MAKE A VERY SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATOR IN EDUCATION IF HE CAN INSPIRE CONFIDENCE INSTEAD OF FEAR IN HIS SUBORDINATES. CERTAIN SIGNS ALREADY POINT TO HIS ALIGNMENT WITH HIGHLY RESPECTED UNIVERSITY RECTOR BARAKANA, WHO HAS FOR TWO YEARS BEEN ENGAGED IN A BITTER DISPUTE WITH BIMAZUBUTE ON THE ROLE AND TRADITIONAL INTEGRITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BURUNDI. IN ANY EVENT, SIMBANANIYE'S NEW JOB IS OF KEY IMPORTANCE, EVEN THOUGH LESS PRESTIGIOUS THAN HIS OLD ONE.

7. ALL IN ALL, THE VARIOUS CHANGES SEEM TO ADD UP TO A PLUS FOR EFFICIENCY, WITH SOME IMPROVEMENT IN THE CALIBER OF TOP GOVERNMENT
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PERSONALITIES. OSTENSIBLY, THE CURRENTLY LEADING CLIQUE OF INTERIOR MINISTER RWURI AND JUSTICE MINISTER MINANI IS NOT AFFECTED BY THE SHIFTS. IN FACT, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE PROBABLY NOT GAINED MUCH IF AT ALL, SINCE SIMBANANIYE, WHOM THEY HATE, IS STILL IN THE CABINET, AND SINCE SUCH MEN AS MPOZAGARA, BIZINDAVYI, AND BIGAYIMPUNZI ARE NOT THEIR ASSOCIATES. WE ASSUME THAT RWURI AT LEAST WAS PRESSING MICOMBERO FOR A MORE FAR REACHING HOUSECLEANING IN HIS OWN FAVOR, BUT RWURI, WHO IS CONSIDERED A BANEFUL, VENGEFUL, AND ALMOST PSYCHOPATHIC INFLUENCE HERE FOR TUTSI EXTREMISM, NO DOUBT HURT HIS CHANCES LAST WEEK WHEN HE OVERSTEPPED HIMSELF BY TRYING TO ARREST THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF BURURI FOR SPEAKING OUT IN BEHALF OF MORE JUSTICE FOR HUTUS. MICOMBERO HAD TO INTERVENE TO OVERRULE RWURI AND EXONERATE THE BISHOP, AND WE KNOW THAT SIMBANANIYE URGED MICOMBERO STRONGLY TO THIS DECISION. THUS, TUTSI FACTIONALISM AND INTRIGUE ARE BY NO MEANS AT AN END, BUT THE LATEST SHIFTS MAY PRESAGE A BIT MORE CABINET STABILITY AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCE, WITH SOME

WHAT BETTER CONTROL OVER RWURI'S RUTHLESSNESS AND EFFORTS TO
AGGRANDIZE HIS POSITION. WHAT STILL REMAINS A MYSTERY IS
WHETHER MICOMBERO THOUGHT UP THESE ALTERATIONS IN SOLITARY
SELF-COMMUNION, OR, IF NOT, WHO HIS MOST INFLUENTIAL INNER
ADVISERS AT THIS MOMENT ARE.
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